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ABSTRACT

Matching national needs in the less commonly taught languages (LCTL) with a capacity to fill those needs through language instruction is discussed. The thesis proposed is that an ongoing strategic planning process must be initiated, aimed at insuring instructional capacity to deliver needed LCTL competencies. In particular, this planning process would be aimed at creating a new national architecture for sustaining LCTL instructional capacity, and would require creation of planning mechanisms for tracking needs and coordinating delivery systems. The planning process would also require a rational, systematic implementation strategy. In the current report, needs and capacities for LCTL are first defined and existing instruction and instructional capacity are assessed briefly. The design of the proposed new architecture for LCTL instruction is summarized, and the relative roles of educational institutions and the disciplinary fields are discussed. Finally, a variety of practical concerns in designing and implementing a strategic planning process are considered. (MSE)

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# *National Strategic Planning in the Less Commonly Taught Languages*

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# *National Strategic Planning in the Less Commonly Taught Languages*

*Richard D. Brecht and A. Ronald Walton*

Global developments in recent years have forced policymakers in the United States to take a new look at international security and ethnic conflict, economic competitiveness, and such international concerns as humanitarian assistance, human rights, and ecology. This new view directly mandates a national capability to train and maintain, at a minimum, a segment of the population with the cultural and linguistic knowledge needed to communicate with the world beyond the confines of Western Europe.

Past national efforts to create this type of national capacity, while laudable, have met with only limited success. Among most Americans today, competence in a foreign language is often thought to be competence in French, German, or Spanish. If one views existing language instruction in the academic community as a gauge of national preparation to take on this global linguistic mission, the foregoing perception is in fact based on a reality: approximately 94 percent of college language enrollments and 98 percent of secondary school language enrollments are in these three languages. The remainder of the world's languages, including those languages that increasingly seem to figure so prominently in today's news reports, have come to be called in this country the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs).

The recent spate of federal initiatives provides adequate testimony that past attempts have failed to create a more broad-based capacity in these languages, which are increasingly seen as crucial to our national interest. For example, the National Security Education Program (NSEP) concentrates on world areas other than Western Europe; the Foreign Language Assistance Act is focused on introducing Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Korean into the schools; the creation of three National Foreign Language Resource Centers within Title VI of the Higher Education Act is intended to provide the fresh focus on language study that over a hundred comprehensive language and area studies centers have apparently failed to do over nearly three decades; the Special Opportunities in Foreign Languages initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities is focused on Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian.

Private foundations have joined this movement as well: the Ford Foundation

funding of the new National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages; the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation's project to introduce Chinese into the high schools; national surveys of Chinese, Japanese, and Russian carried out by the National Foreign Language Center and funded by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the U.S. Japan Foundation and the U.S.-Japan Friendship Commission, and the Ford Foundation, respectively. Added to this are the state and local initiatives aimed at bringing the LCTLs into the K–12 sector of the education system.

However, a recognition of increasing needs from the demand side of LCTL competency coupled with renewed efforts to match these needs from the supply side, as evidenced by the recent efforts noted above, by no means assures an effective match. Indeed, the attempt to match such supply to demands has been going on in one form or another since World War II, apparently without the desired results.

This paper attempts to present a fresh perspective on matching national needs in the less commonly taught languages with a capacity to fill those needs through the vehicle of language instruction. The thesis put forward here is that an ongoing strategic planning process must be initiated, one that is aimed at ensuring instructional capacity to deliver the needed LCTL competencies. In particular, this planning process would be aimed at creating a new national architecture for sustaining this instructional capacity in the LCTLs. In addition, such a process would require the creation of planning mechanisms, bodies, or organizations capable of tracking needs and coordinating the complex task of maintaining a supply system of LCTL capabilities, including matching capacity to needs in ways other than through language instruction. Finally, the planning process would require a rational, systematic implementation strategy.

## NEEDS AND CAPACITIES

Such terms as *national needs* and *national capacity* often are used rather loosely in such discussions, so some clarification is useful from the outset. We use the term *national needs* in a rather narrow sense to refer to needs defined as numbers of experts, specific skills, and determined levels of usable competence in a given language. By *competence* is meant the capacity necessary to perform a range of occupationally or professionally relevant communicative tasks with members of another cultural and linguistic community using the language of that community, whether that community be domestic or abroad. Such tasks may include interpersonal or interpretative communication, and the type of usage may well include diplomatic, business, academic, scientific, and domestic social services, as examples. Indeed, it is possible for such needs to be addressed in part by machine translation or other such technological means, but the discussion here will be restricted to developing through instruction the language competence of a cadre of the broader citizenship of the country.

This definition of national needs should be distinguished from other "general education" rationales typically offered in the United States for foreign language study, such as the study of a foreign language for reasons of personal fulfillment; ameliorating ethnocentricism and promoting an appreciation of cultural diversity; developing an understanding of linguistic systems and language itself; better understanding one's own language and its structure; or developing higher-order skills and analytic capabilities. There is no question of the value of this "educational mission," but the fact that only a small number of American students ever go beyond the equivalent of two years of college language study clearly distinguishes this "educational" demand from the "competency" demand outlined above.

Finally, in addition to these two demand areas, competency and educational, there is a third demand that can be termed "ethnic." Under this rubric we refer to the obvious national need to deal domestically with an increasingly multicultural and polylingual society, while at the same time ensuring that this segment of the population has at least the opportunity and necessary resources to preserve first-language skills for employment in international contexts. Here must be included the issues of language maintenance and bilingualism, which then bring together on one agenda the fields of English as a second language, Spanish, and the host of languages like Chinese, Japanese, and others having a strong presence in the United States.

By *national capacity* we refer to the ability of the country to respond to demands for competencies in particular languages for whatever reason, including the ability to create instruction in languages not currently or generally offered. National capacity is seen here as the ability to respond to constant or changing national needs as defined above.

The match of national language capacity to needs is an established tradition in countries around the world, falling under the rubric of language planning. In most cases of national planning, the policy derived typically has at least three components: (1) for multilingual countries, a policy for determining the appropriate emphasis on teaching and learning domestic languages, (2) an emphasis on English as an international language, and (3) the selection of a handful of foreign languages other than English based on geopolitical history and/or economic and trade needs.

However, language planning in the United States is in some ways unique in the world. First, a vast majority of the citizenry already speak English as a first language. Second, domestic language concerns have arisen only recently, and are almost exclusively directed toward Spanish. Third, while the choice of French, German, and Spanish fits within the emphasis on historical factors, the United States goes further than most countries in espousing a "superpower" language policy that is essentially global in nature: the national interest, it is argued, is best served by creating and maintaining language specialists capable of dealing with a broad range of cultures and countries around the world. And this is a concern not only of the government but of the academic sector as well.

## LCTLS IN THE UNITED STATES: AN OVERVIEW BY INSTITUTIONAL ENROLLMENTS

Beyond this brief description of the LCTLs and the rationale for interest in them, it is useful to characterize these languages in more detail. One way to do this is again to use LCTL enrollment figures in the academic community as a rough gauge. In the United States the LCTLs include over a hundred languages, with student enrollments in institutions of higher learning ranging from the thousands to the single digits. An overview is provided below.

*The principal less commonly taught languages.* These languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian) mirror, although on a much reduced scale, the commonly taught languages in being generally available in schools as well as universities around the country. The principal problem with these languages, though, is their degree of difficulty, which makes it virtually impossible for students to reach a functional ability solely on the basis of academic programs in this country.

*The much less commonly taught languages.* There are approximately thirty non–West European/non–North American languages taught in the United States, each of which has undergraduate and graduate enrollments across the country in the hundreds (as per Modern Language Association fall 1990 statistics).[1] For these languages instruction is available only in a handful of institutions across the country. This group includes languages like Armenian, Czech, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Thai, and Turkish.

*The least commonly taught languages.* In addition to the languages mentioned above, the formal educational system in the United States offers approximately eighty other languages, taken only by a handful or at most dozens of students. These languages, even more than the preceding group, occupy a very marginal position in the educational system, many of them being offered only at one or two institutions across the United States in a given year, often on an "on-demand" individual basis.

*The rarely (or never) taught languages.* Finally, there are many other of the world's several thousand languages that can be viewed as "critical" to our national needs and that are rarely or never taught in the United States. (For example, of the twenty-three languages assigned the highest priority by Africanists in the United States, only a half-dozen are listed as taught in the fall of 1990.) For some of these languages there is linguistic and anthropological expertise available; for many others sufficient basic expertise is totally lacking.

## SOURCES FOR PROVIDING NATIONAL CAPACITY: THE SUPPLY SECTORS

The preceding characterization of LCTLs, given in terms of enrollments in instructional programs in academic institutions, is a rather narrow view of

**Table 1**
**National Capacity Sectors**

A. Federal (training programs, materials, testing, etc.)

B. Private

1. Proprietary school instruction programs (e.g. Berlitz)
2. Corporate language training programs
3. Language services
   a. Contracted language instruction (private vendors)
   b. Translation/interpretation services
   c. Mediation/foreign visitor escort services

C. Domestic ethnic language preservation/enhancement

1. Recent immigrants
2. American-born speakers of languages other than English
3. Instructional programs aimed at first-language preservation (community and church programs, Saturday schools, after-hours programs in public schools, etc.)

D. Academic

1. Traditional classroom-based programs
2. Auxiliary system (individualized, immersion, summer intensive, adult programs, study abroad, exchange programs, distance education systems, etc.)

national capacity, since in our approach there are at least four national sectors for supplying or producing this expertise (table 1):

— The *federal sector*, with government language training programs designed for employees of government agencies, focused generally on military, intelligence, and diplomatic needs but including such agencies and departments as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Agricultural Department, and the Drug Enforcement Agency.

— The *private sector*, which consists of at least three components: the proprietary school instruction system, delivering instruction in language often but not exclusively aimed at professionals needing basic language skills for business, travel, and tourism; the corporate language training system, offering instruction to employees on a regular basis; and the language services industry, including contracted language instruction by private vendors, mediation and foreign visitor escort services, and translation and interpretation services. (A prime example of the latter is the AT&T Language Line, which performs specific language tasks often requiring highly specialized training in translation and interpretation.)

— The *domestic ethnic language preservation/enhancement sector*, consisting of recent immigrants, American-born speakers of languages other than En-

glish, and a domestic system, generally quite informal, for the preservation and development of the home-country languages of these immigrants and their descendants. This system operates through home-bound, parental instruction as well as through more formal instruction in after-hours public and private school programs and "day school" programs (such as Saturday schools in Asian communities). Increasingly, members of these communities are seeking instruction in college-level programs as well, though such programs are generally not geared to the "nativelike" capabilities many of these speakers already have.

— The *academic sector*, including both the traditional classroom-based educational language system and the less structured "auxiliary system" on the fringes of the educational system. This auxiliary system provides special summer programs, study-abroad programs, specialized programs in translation and interpretation, language courses for nontraditional learners such as those offered in university extension programs, self-study programs within educational institutions, distance education systems, and the like.

Among the four sectors, the third is unique in that it possesses the potential to supply language capacity without instruction—a seemingly largely overlooked contribution, especially with regard to recent immigrants and Americans who have preserved their home-country languages to high levels of competence. This view of ethnic language capacity raises the clear parallel to the "make or buy" question in industry. The use of native speakers as a foreign language resource can be seen as an instance of the "buy" mode of service, while instruction is aimed at the production or "make" option. Theoretically, any endeavor at delivering national foreign language capacity must take all of these systems into account.

## CREATING A NEW ARCHITECTURE FOR LCTL INSTRUCTION

Matching national language capacity to needs does not have to involve formal language instruction, an issue discussed below. However, it is clearly the case that instruction figures prominently in all four of the supply sectors discussed above. Thus, any attempt to introduce strategic planning into LCTL capacity must directly address the instruction component.

As regards language instruction, we propose the perhaps novel view that the central organizing unit for purposes of planning and capacity enhancement in instructional delivery is a given "language field," such as Chinese or Twi, or in some cases a "subfield," such as the Burmese subfield of the Southeast Asian language field. For purposes of instruction, each language field is characterized as a system consisting of three kinds of components: an overarching superstructure that gives shape to the language field; an infrastructure that provides support for language delivery programs; and the language instruction programs themselves, housed at formal institutions in the government, private, academic, or

**Table 2**
**The Architecture of a Language Field**

A. Superstructure components

1. The Expertise Base of the field
2. A Language Learning Framework for the field
3. A strategic planning process for the development of the field
4. Field-based proactive organizations

B. Infrastructure components

1. A research tradition
2. A system for the transmission of expertise from the base
3. Connections to area studies programs and scholars
4. Resources for the production of instructional materials and technology-based instruction
5. Close relationships with the home country of the target language
6. Strong connections to international networks and organizations
7. Coherent relationship to the U.S. ethnic community of the target language
8. Rigorous field assessment and feedback mechanisms
9. Institutions committed to the field on a long-term basis

C. Language programs within institutional settings in the four capacity sectors

ethnic sectors. The architectural scheme is outlined and each component is briefly described in table 2.

## *Superstructure Components*

The superstructure, we propose, consists of four components: the Expertise Base, a field-specific Language Learning Framework, a fieldwide strategic planning process, and a fieldwide organizational structure.

*1. The Expertise Base.* We assume that no language field can provide instruction without access to a body of knowledge of the language, its containing culture, and the process of language learning. Accordingly, the Expertise Base for each language must include linguistic, anthropological/cultural, cognition, and second language acquisition (SLA) specialists who command this knowledge. This knowledge includes theoretical underpinnings, language-specific information, and the ability to apply this knowledge to the task of learning the given language in all contexts. In addition, this Expertise Base requires a data bank containing information on the availability of native speakers (numbers, location, dialect varieties, linguistics support structures such as "Saturday schools," and the like).

The Expertise Base is the sine qua non for language instruction; without it, no program can be mounted. Since a system must be prepared to "warehouse" potentially needed languages, investment in the Expertise Base for each language must be long range, given that expertise takes years to create.

2. *A field-specific Language Learning Framework.* The LCTLs in general, and specific language fields in particular, do not have the resources to churn in endless instructional experimentation, as often seems the case with the mainstream European languages or with English as a second or foreign language. Nor are there the resources to develop competing instructional materials for a given language, as with the mainstream languages: given the low market demand for LCTLs, commercial publishers are quite hesitant to fund even one such set of materials. Likewise, resources are too limited to experiment in teacher training with various models, or to embark upon a multitude of assessment strategies. (Developing even one standardized test for a language such as Hindi is expensive and time-consuming; and given the small number of test-takers available, it would take years to norm the test.)

Limited resources, a geographically dispersed learning clientele and expertise, low enrollments, a tiny market for commercial textbook publishers and suppliers of instructional technology—all are factors that suggest the pressing need for fieldwide collaborative planning. Clearly, pedagogical experts in each field need to work collectively to set instructional standards and guidelines for a given language by developing what can be referred to as a Language Learning Framework. Such a framework can guide the design and management of instructional programs, materials development, teacher training, standards and assessment systems, and the whole range of infrastructure components (see below) upon which individual teachers and programs depend. Such a framework must set clear, explicit goals; be designed through the efforts of specialists in such fields as linguistics, anthropology, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and cognition to reflect the best thinking in SLA; provide the flexibility to be adapted by varying local program conditions; and provide for systematic assessment and feedback, both for the learner's own use and for the improvement of the instructional program.[2]

Note that what is proposed here is a *learning* framework as opposed to a *teaching* framework. The focus on learning is meant to ground instruction in SLA theory, research, and application. For the LCTLs this strong emphasis on learning is quite necessary. First, given the difficulty of the languages, classroom contact will never be sufficient to impart higher levels of competence, so extra-program work on the language through "learner-managed learning" becomes imperative. Second, no matter how much formal training is provided, it is clear that most language growth will occur over the learner's lifetime in noninstructional settings, thus strengthening the rationale for training in self-managed learning. Finally, to reach higher levels of competence and to gain genuine understanding of the culture for purposes of communication, study in the target-language culture will be a necessity, and such study particularly requires the self-management of learning.

As noted, the purpose of a fieldwide learning framework is first to arrive at a clear definition of what competencies are desired and how these competencies are best acquired so as to focus scarce resources in the most efficient manner

possible on curricular design, the development of instructional materials, the application of new teaching technologies, teacher training, and assessment and research related to language acquisition. At the same time, the framework acts as a constraining force on endless and unguided experimentation so that knowledge and experience accumulate in a systematic manner. Of course, the framework is not static but in a constant state of change: what counts is that it serves as a fieldwide reference or base point.

*3. A fieldwide strategic planning process.* A given language field must have a knowledge of itself and where it needs to move as regards development. This entails the collection of data on current resources (human, material, and financial), data on enrollments, and an assessment of what steps are required to strengthen the field. In particular, a fieldwide planning process is based on an assessment of the strength of its learning framework, its Expertise Base, and its infrastructure capacity, a topic discussed below.

*4. Fieldwide organizational structures.* In order to collectivize expertise, particularly when it is rare and dispersed, to develop a fieldwide Language Learning Framework, and to maintain a strategic planning process, centralized coordinative mechanisms are necessary. This is all the more true because a field encompasses the expertise and instructional resources of the four national capacity sectors noted earlier. The function of such a mechanism or field-organization is to formulate standards and assessment strategies; to collect data on the field (personnel, programs, enrollments, graduates, postgraduate employment, student competencies, study-abroad opportunities, and the like); and to ascertain fieldwide needs in maintaining and upgrading national capacity, including research, instructional materials, teacher development, and so on. More than anything else, however, the role of such organizations is essentially coordination through planning and networking. At the same time, such organizations serve as the national voice to policymakers and funders as to the needs, and the priorities of these needs, in maintaining and upgrading the field.

### *Infrastructure Components*

The components of a field superstructure are concerned with deep-level coordination and planning. However, in order to implement instructional programs, a number of supporting components ideally must be in place. These infrastructure components range from critical to optional. However, it is clear from studying the more powerful LCTL fields that, as regards capacity, the more such components are in place, the stronger the field becomes.

*1. A fieldwide research tradition.* To be sure, there are scholars and specialists who conduct research on the linguistic, anthropological, sociological, psychological, and SLA dimensions of a language field. However, blending these and other disciplines into a coherent research tradition has yet to be accomplished. In addition, since specialists in each disciplinary area generally do not pursue research with reference to a Language Learning Framework or some other such

fieldwide reference point, it is often difficult to make the research applicable to solving problems directed at the improvement of second language learning. Thus, a strong field is one that has identified and prioritized research needs and then encourages and rewards research efforts aimed at building a cumulative knowledge base.

2. *A fieldwide system for the transmission of expertise.* The Expertise Base, necessary as it is, is only a base. When language programs are dispersed across the four supply sectors, the expertise created through disciplinary research must ultimately make its way through a range of specialists more concerned with the delivery of instruction than with research. At the first level of this chain are those who will develop instructional materials, train teachers, and design and maintain instructional programs. At the next level are program managers responsible for the design and management of programs at the institutional level. Finally come those who instruct in formal settings at the level of the course, and among these practitioners there will again be a range of expertise from advanced to novice.

A strong infrastructure provides mechanisms that walk the expertise downstream in a systematic manner. At the higher level this transmission of expertise is provided by graduate programs in linguistics and area studies departments that combine training in linguistics, intercultural communication, and SLA so as to create and constantly resupply a language field with new sources of expertise. Much the same can be said of the need to transmit such expertise through graduate schools of education, which are charged with preparing K–12 teachers to offer instruction in the LCTLs. Further downstream are the fieldwide in-service and preservice teacher training programs typically offered in summer institutes. In addition to teacher training, however, an array of mechanisms ideally are in place to promote professional development both through fieldwide, centralized mechanisms and through local institutional contexts as well.

3. *Area studies connections: Title VI.* In those cases where LCTL instruction is closely linked with, or even dependent upon, area studies, as in the case of Title VI centers, a strong infrastructure reveals active collaboration between the area studies community and the language instruction specialists, in matters both intellectual and structural.

On the intellectual side, as SLA has moved from a strict concern with the mastery of purely linguistic features to language use in authentic cultural contexts, the content of language instruction in the LCTLs benefits from the cultural expertise of the area studies specialists. At the same time, language programs focused on national needs as defined earlier provide instruction, particularly at the advanced levels, in such content areas as business, economics, and the human and natural sciences in addition to the traditional concentration on language and literature.

From the structural perspective, area studies provides the greatest contribution to language instruction by supporting it with regard to advocacy of needs, by demanding expertise in linguistics and SLA, and by providing the resources

and support for career development, teacher training, materials development, assessment strategies, and other such infrastructure concerns.

*4. Resources for the production of instructional materials.* Instructional materials (including textbooks for use at both lower and higher levels of instruction), reference grammars, and dictionaries are of central concern to the LCTLs. In some cases the few existing instructional materials themselves serve as a de facto curriculum, which at least gives some guidance to new and untrained teachers. A language field benefits not just from having such materials available or from developing them sporadically, but from the capacity to mount a materials production industry. This capacity harkens back to expertise in such fields as linguistics, anthropology, and SLA and the transmission of this expertise to potential text developers.

The capacity of a field to produce materials that reflect shared needs logically suggests fieldwide collective data collection and planning, especially for low-enrollment languages, on just which sorts of materials are available, which are needed, what skills and levels are to be addressed, and on through a range of similar concerns. A weak infrastructure is characterized by the lack of central, collective planning; by the development of text materials by individual developers working on their own perceptions of need without regard to fieldwide consultation; by the development of materials absent the requisite expertise and training in related disciplines; and by the production of competing texts in fields where resources are scarce. For extremely low enrollment languages or languages where no materials exist, creating and maintaining the expertise discussed earlier at least gives a storage capacity that can be tapped when the need for materials arises.

In addition, as a part of the materials resource capacity, the LCTLs stand to benefit perhaps more than the more commonly taught languages from the application of new technologies, such as video, interactive video, CD ROM, and computer-based learning, to instructional contexts. Emphasis on building communicative competence in very different cultures is enhanced by the visual presentation of the culture. Self-directed learning using computer-driven technologies is extremely useful in language fields where the difficulty of the language requires considerable work outside classrooms and where there is often a shortage of trained teachers. In addition, the use of new technologies for developing print materials (e.g. desktop publishing) is again a mark of a strong infrastructure, given that commercial publishers are generally uninterested in producing text materials for a tiny number of customers.

*5. Relationships with the home country of the language and culture.* The home countries of the languages being taught in U.S. settings are a critical source of expertise, teachers, instructional materials, and other resources that are necessary to develop materials and programs. A strong infrastructure is characterized by elaborated mechanisms that facilitate the flow of expertise, teachers, materials, and realia as well as mechanisms for scholarly exchange in the language area, teacher and student exchange programs, and cross-country collaborative re-

search. The more plentiful such mechanisms are and the more formal the channels of supply, the more likely that a given language field will have a continuous capacity to utilize these resources to the maximum.

From a language acquisition perspective, these countries serve as the source for study abroad; for advanced training in formal programs; and, through residence, for the development of occupationally relevant language skills and as a host for collaborative research. Again, the more elaborated and formalized such programs are, the more likely that the capacity of a language field is being enhanced.

One form that such mechanisms can take is the creation of, or access to, organizations that focus specifically on such base-country/home-country relationships. In many cases language fields, especially the smaller fields, need not rely on their own efforts and resources but can rely for administrative and programmatic expertise on existing study-abroad and exchange organizations. The higher the enrollments and the more elaborated the home-country relationships, the more likely that a field will want to set up its own programs, a task that logically fits within the functions of the field's national organization.

6. *International networks and organizations.* Many LCTLs needed or offered in the United States are also of research and instructional interest in other countries. International networks and organizations built around a language field offer at least the opportunity for collective work in research and in the development of expertise, as well as for the sharing and in some cases joint development of instructional materials. In fact, one key function of international networks and organizations is to avoid duplication of effort in language fields that are low-enrollment internationally.

7. *Relationship to the domestic ethnic community.* Native speakers of LCTLs residing in the United States may well be contributing to national language capacity through employment in internationally oriented businesses, research institutes, university programs, or service organizations, or through their work in translation and interpretation in both domestic and foreign contexts. In addition, however, they can also make a strong contribution to national capacity by being involved in one of the four national LCTL instructional delivery sectors noted earlier, including the education system. While they may well require training and education in certain facets of language instruction, first- (and possibly second- ) generation immigrants are obviously not in need of training in the target language itself. In order for language fields outside the principal LCTLs (where access to the native speaking community is quite established) to benefit from the possible contribution of native speakers to their infrastructure, there must be a concerted effort to identify interested parties through some such system as volunteer registries—again, a very natural role for national field-organizations to play. Part of this identification and registry effort is to maintain a storage capacity for languages currently not offered.

For second- and third-generation (and beyond) members of ethnic communities in the United States, a national policy aimed at the preservation of these

languages would naturally promote the development of a national capacity in these languages. Where the LCTL fields come into play is their role in offering some form of formal instruction to members of these minorities so that minimal skills are preserved—or, better, so that such speakers reach advanced competence in their ethnic language. By definition, an LCTL field encompasses such instruction.

A language field with a strong infrastructure in this domain creates and maintains additional expertise in the form of SLA research on the most effective way to provide for instructed language acquisition of limited-proficiency, native-like speakers. This expertise is then translated into features of curriculum design, materials development, assessment procedures and instruments, the training of teacher trainers, and teacher training itself, among many such components of instruction. What is ultimately created and provided is either a separate pedagogical tradition for learners with first-language exposure, or a distinct subcomponent of a field's general pedagogical tradition.

This specially tailored tradition either is then manifested in instructional programs designed exclusively for members of an ethnic community (such as Saturday schools), or it is included in instruction in programs where such students enroll along with students with no prior home-life exposure to the language (government training programs, proprietary schools, the educational auxiliary system, or the educational system).

*8. Field assessment and feedback provisions.* While the assessment of student linguistic abilities and instructional programs is a part of a strong pedagogical tradition, fieldwide planning and policy decisions are in need of fieldwide assessment for the purpose of feedback to the field itself as well as to policymakers and funders. Each field needs to know where it is headed, what it is accomplishing, where it is failing. A field with a strong infrastructure component in assessment and feedback provides mechanisms and procedures for evaluating all the superstructure and infrastructure components discussed and for redressing weaknesses. Such an undertaking requires the constant collection and analysis of data on student performance with respect to one or more national metrics and to program performance as related to student performance; on the ongoing development and transmission of expertise; on initiatives in career development; on area studies connections; on the production of instructional materials; on relationships with the home country of the target language; on international networks; on policy and funding initiatives; and so forth. Not only is the data collected, but it is made available to the field on a regular basis so as to inform fieldwide planning.

*9. Committed institutions.* The most important component of field infrastructure is institutions committed to offering programs in the language, whether they be student or teacher training, regular academic or supplemental (like study abroad or distance education). Institutional commitment, in this regard, means that enrollment fluctuations are not grounds for discontinuing a program. It assumes that the institution has invested for the long term in tenured faculty,

perhaps graduate programs, even research and training centers, and the like. These institutions are known in the country as the main centers for the learning of a given language or group of languages, and they take pride in that reputation.

### *Instructional Programs*

The third component of language field architecture concerns the actual delivery of instruction within training programs generally housed within formal institutional structures. All that need be pointed out here is that the existence of these programs does not constitute a language field; rather, they are the surface manifestations of an underlying complex web grounded in super- and infrastructure components.

### *Classification of LCTL Fields by Strength of Architecture*

Based on the strength of superstructure and infrastructure components discussed above, and on our work of over five years with the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, we would characterize the LCTLs in the United States thus:

— Group 1: More developed architecture (A. Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian; B. Hebrew, Turkish)
— Group 2: Diffused, multilanguage architecture (African languages, East European languages, Southeast Asian languages)
— Group 3: Inchoate architecture (Persian, Czech, etc.)
— Group 4: No architecture (Korean, South Asian languages, Oceana, etc.)

From a strategic planning perspective, this characterization of languages in the United States based on the notion of field architecture provides a much more meaningful map for strengthening national capacity through formal instruction than does our earlier characterization of languages by enrollments in academic instructional programs. Also, a description of field architecture provides a rather precise picture of where resources should be channeled for instructional purposes, and it even suggests a ranking of priorities: superstructure before infrastructure, and both before direct attention to instructional programs.

## FIELD ARCHITECTURE VS. INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE: STRIKING A BALANCE

The case can be made that there has existed up to now a de facto policy with regard to strengthening the LCTLs that is based almost exclusively on institutional rather than field architectural considerations. Resources and efforts have been focused primarily at the program level, sometimes aimed at strengthening, but more often at expanding, instructional programs and enrollments in them—a

state of affairs supported both by outside funding sources and by the LCTL fields themselves.

While the resources have flowed toward programs, the super- and infrastructure components necessary to support these programs have remained largely unaddressed and unsupported. Were one to think of a field's superstructure as the roots and trunk of a tree and the infrastructure components as branches, then programs can be viewed as the fruit at the ends of these branches. Past funding practice, then, can be characterized as watering the fruit directly rather than watering the tree, a practice that actually can do harm to the tree in the long run. In some ways this metaphor aptly describes past problems in strengthening LCTL instructional capacity and reveals why so many of the LCTL fields suffer from poor instructional quality, poor teacher training, poor instructional materials, impoverished research on language learning and curriculum design, and the like. Moreover, past and current approaches to building LCTL instructional capacity in some ways have tended even to undermine institutional architecture. The Title VI Language and Area Studies Centers, for example, disperse resources to institutions, not to fields; and the competitive nature of this funding pits institutions in the same language field against each other, resulting in a lack of the centralized, collaborative planning necessary to build quality institutional programs—let alone fields.

The new Title VI National Foreign Language Resource Centers do little to change this picture. Like the Title VI Language and Area Studies Centers, no one institution can amass the expertise to develop and guide an entire language field. Each National Foreign Language Resource Center is inherently limited by the specializations of its local faculty, such that it cannot begin to take on the superstructure and infrastructure components of even one Group 1 language field (such as Arabic or Japanese), much less the forty to fifty fields and subfields of pressing national interest. In this sense, the National Foreign Language Resource Centers are in fact not really "national" centers; they are rather a national network of "local" centers. Their limitations are obvious in that of all the LCTLs now on the national menu, center projects are limited to just a few (primarily Chinese and Japanese), and their national efforts are by nature quite piecemeal: test development in several, instructional materials for a few, research on areas that have not been prioritized by the LCTLs either collectively or by specific fields. This assessment is meant not to question the valuable work of the centers, but rather to define the whole concept emanating from Title VI as attempting "national" improvement by focusing on local institutions without prior regard to LCTL field architecture generally and specific language field architecture in particular. What is lacking is significant support for focusing first on the collective needs of the LCTLs and of the specific language fields, and only then on enabling institutions.

Contrast the institution-based approach to a language field architecture approach, where resources would flow to fieldwide organizations made up of members from the various institutions who take charge in planning the enhance-

ment of the necessary superstructure and infrastructure components. The work of these collective bodies would then be farmed back out to the relevant institutions. The constraints and strengths of local institutions then become the unique contributions that each makes to the overall field development process, the benefits of which then flow back to all of the language programs in all of the institutions for a given field in the form of research results, teacher training models, improved instructional materials, and the like.

Unfortunately, even more recent funding initiatives, designed—quite logically, it would seem at first blush—to expand programs in the principal LCTLs, tend to follow the traditional emphasis on programs and on random infrastructure (not superstructure) components rather than on a planned, systematic approach to developing field architecture. For example, the new Foreign Language Assistance Act promotes the expansion of K–12 programs in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Korean. Naturally, such initiatives are praiseworthy; but in the long run they do not just ignore the necessity of strengthening the underpinnings of language fields, they actually funnel off resources to programs, which in turn weakens field strength by placing more demands on already shaky and underresourced superstructure and infrastructure components (e.g. hiring more teachers without adequate training, expanding programs without adequate instructional materials).

To be sure, the rising interest in at least the principal LCTLs has seen some funding attention to various infrastructure components such as in-service teacher training, summer teacher workshops, the development of proficiency guidelines and tests, occasional efforts at improving instructional materials, and the like.[3] What is remarkable about these efforts is that they have gone on, and continue to do so, without attention to the underlying superstructure components.[4] There has been no funding aimed at reconstructing the Expertise Base of the LCTLs broadly or in specific language fields through graduate programs that should be training the future generation of LCTL specialists and scholars. For the K–12 sector, in-service teacher training programs and summer teacher workshops in the LCTLs abound, but there has been no funding aimed at building LCTL teaching into the nation's graduate schools of education. Indeed, the education schools do not seem to have called for such funding.

Likewise, while language educators, including LCTL specialists, have focused on learning outcomes for a decade now, via proficiency guidelines, there has been little attention to how the learning process necessary to reach these outcomes should be structured. That is, resources have flowed to establishing outcomes but not to developing Language Learning Frameworks or the equivalent. Moreover, except for the Ford initiative in setting up the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, teachers' organizations in the LCTLs have not been targeted for special funding resources, though they are perhaps the only bodies capable of mounting and guiding fieldwide strategic planning. In short, most resources seem to have flowed to programs, some to infrastructure components, but practically none to the root of the problem—or

rather the root of the solution, namely field superstructure. Without prior work on what learners need to know and how best to learn it—which defines what expertise needs to be developed—it is perhaps premature to charge into teacher training, curriculum development, instructional materials development, the application of new technologies, and the like.

## INITIATING A STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

### *Pan-LCTL Concerns*

Based on the discussion to this point, we suggest that one of the main goals of a national strategic planning process should be the creation of a new LCTL architecture. This planning should channel resource allocation so as to strike a balance between strengthening the superstructure and infrastructure of LCTL fields, and strengthening and expanding instructional programs located in various types of institutional settings spread across the four capacity sectors. While the ultimate goal is to build up the superstructure and infrastructure components of specific language fields, a logical first step is to begin to build a pan-LCTL architecture that addresses the needs of all the LCTLs collectively. This logic derives from a general sense among LCTL specialists that, given the task at hand and the limited resources available, collective action can be effective in arriving at a plan addressing common problems and goals.

Just as in the case of each specific language field, such as African languages, Japanese, and Southeast Asian languages, a pan-LCTL architectural configuration can be seen to have the same superstructure components:

1. a pan-LCTL Expertise Base
2. an LCTL generic Language Learning Framework
3. a national pan-LCTL strategic planning process
4. national pan-LCTL coordinating mechanisms

The third component, a broad-based strategic planning process for all of the LCTLs collectively, is the very issue addressed in this paper. Coordinating mechanisms or bodies will be discussed below. This leads to a discussion of components (1) and (2) above—the construction of a new and more powerful pan-LCTL Expertise Base, and the development of a pan-LCTL Language Learning Framework. Several strategies come to mind here.

As a first step, it seems obvious at this point in the twentieth century that the Expertise Base in the LCTLs is in disrepair and in need of a vigorous rebuilding initiative. Given the range of knowledge bases that must be developed and integrated in order to conduct needed research, given the fieldwork and basic research needed to develop the resource materials that underlie instruction and instructional materials (such as reference works and dictionaries), and given the time and energy required to bring such research to bear on the construction of instructional models, the academic sector would seem the natural focal point for

housing and enhancing the Expertise Base, including the development of a warehousing capacity for languages deemed critically important in the near future.

If there is agreement that the Expertise Base must be rebuilt, and that it indeed should be located in institutions within the academic sector, then a serious effort should be made to redirect much of the current and even private funding away from a near-obsession with language programs themselves. More resources must be channeled into the Expertise Base itself via freshly configured graduate programs bringing in SLA research, linguistics, sociolinguistics, cognition, anthropology, ethnolinguistics, and so forth. Among other things, this would suggest a rather radical revision of the current goals and structure of Title VI legislation and a dramatic redefinition of the role Title VI Language and Area Studies Centers and the National Foreign Language Resource Centers play as regards the language component (distinct from the area studies component).

At the same time, there is much to be gained by investing both intellectual and funding resources in conceptualizing and constructing a generic LCTL Language Learning Framework. Such a framework needs a basic design that is generalizable across the four capacity sectors. Development of the generic framework would provide a base or reference point for much more standardization and much less duplication in efforts to mount a coherent research agenda. It would improve program and curriculum design; upgrade teacher training; guide in the development of instructional materials and in the design and application of instruction using new technologies; and provide more uniformity in the assessment and constant redirection of instructional programs. While specialists in all the supply sectors should be involved in the development of such a framework, we might expect the academic sector to take the lead, since it is the logical locus of the Expertise Base.[5]

### *Strategic Planning within and across Capacity Sectors*

A national undertaking of the sort proposed here for addressing the needs of the LCTLs collectively, as well as the needs of individual language fields, obviously requires a degree of coordination, both within and across the four capacity sectors, that has yet to be achieved. Clearly, in the first place such coordination has to address discontinuities within the sectors. For example, among the government agencies, work on individual languages is subject to turf protection, competition for resources, and the waste of duplicated efforts. For the private sector, there has been and continues to be a lack of standards and quality control. For the academic sector, confusion over the educational, competency, and ethnic demands continues to diffuse the formulation of clear instructional goals, thus hindering the development of structural configurations necessary to realize these different missions. For the Title VI centers, one finds turf concerns much the same as those that have plagued the federal sector. Finally, there has been practically no attempt to develop the ethnic sector as a logical source for the preservation of

first-language skills, nor to explore the role of community schools mounted by the various ethnic-language groups and scattered across the country.

Naturally, intersector discontinuities are even more pronounced, and undoubtedly more difficult to overcome. Yet the case seems clear that a great amount of money and person-hours are being wasted through duplication of effort as each sector goes about its work on a given language field. All are struggling independently with program and curriculum design, teacher training, the development of instructional materials, the uses of instructional technologies, and the like, with little or no coordination. Some sectors pursue unrelated research agendas, and there often is little agreement on either the assessment of programs or the competencies of individual learners. For example, the federal sector is committed to proficiency assessment, but this assessment mode has not been enthusiastically embraced by the academic sector (in no small part because of the expense of "proficiency testing"); it is only sporadically used in the private sector; and it is nearly absent in the ethnic sector.

In an effort to try to formulate some picture of the intra- and intersector situation with regard to language fields, we offer the organizational map shown in table 3. The columns characterize the capacity sectors, and each row represents a language field. This map is meant to identify the players and the organizational configurations that would be required, if nothing else, simply to coordinate a strategic planning process aimed at improving instruction in the LCTLs.

If one works down the columns, the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) and the newly formed Center for the Advancement of Language Learning (CALL) would seem to be the leading candidates for intersector coordination across language fields within the federal sector. Some work on standards for private vendors such as Berlitz and Inlingua is under way in a project initiated by the National Foreign Language Center and now being managed by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). The Ford Foundation has supplied the funds that have led to a coordinating body for the academic sector, the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL). The ethnic sector remains essentially untouched by any sort of organizational body.

What is conspicuously absent are coordination bodies of any sort that cut across all four sectors for a given language field, the result being that intersector planning for language fields remains essentially unaddressed. The overwhelming number of blank cells in the grid suggests the amount and type of work that would be necessary for a national strategic planning process to go forward with designing a new architecture for both strengthening and creating a national capacity in the LCTLs. Most interesting perhaps is the notion that the sum of all the rows and columns suggests the need for a single pan-LCTL planning and coordination mechanism, organization, or council that would begin to assume a role in filling in the blank cells.

The table recognizes that beyond the United States there are international bodies committed to improving instruction in a given language. One example is

MAPRJAL (the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature), which attempts to improve Russian language instruction globally. China also has several such organizations.

**Table 3**
**An Organizational Map for the LCTLs**

| | DOMESTIC | | | | | INTER-NATIONAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Federal | Private | Ethnic | Academic | Fieldwide | |
| African | | | | ALTA | | |
| Arabic | | | | AATA | | |
| Chinese | | | | CLTA | | |
| East European | | | | AATSEEL | | |
| Hebrew | | | | NAPH | | |
| Japanese | | | | ATJ | | |
| Russian | | | | ACTR | | MAPRJAL |
| Southeast Asian | | | | COTSEAL | | |
| Central European | | | | | | |
| Central Asian | | | | | | |
| Eurasian | | | | | | |
| (Other) | | | | | | |
| | ILR/CALL | ASTM | | NCOLCTL | Pan-LCTL | |

*Notes:*

AATA = American Association of Teachers of Arabic
AATSEEL = American Association for the Teaching of Slavic and East European Languages
ACTR = American Council of Teachers of Russian
ALTA = African Language Teachers Association
ATJ = Association of Teachers of Japanese
ASTM = American Society for Testing and Materials
CALL = Center for the Advancement of Language Learning
CLTA = Chinese Language Teachers Association
COTSEAL = Consortium of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages
ILR = Interagency Language Roundtable
NAPH = National Association of Professors of Hebrew
MAPRJAL = International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature
NCOLCTL = National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages

### *Strategic Planning and Capacity Management*

Much of the discussion here has focused on the need for strategic planning in the LCTLs strictly with regard to language instruction, and for good reason: language instruction is a clear and established response to national needs. However, since the goal of strategic planning in the LCTLs is to match national capacity to national needs, it must be recognized that instruction is only one mechanism to provide such a match. In fact, it could be argued that given the high expense and considerable organizational effort required to mount instruction, it is more properly viewed as a mechanism of the last resort for providing national capacity in language competency (again, the "make or buy" question). This suggests the inclusion of a final, overarching component in the LCTL strategic planning process: an attempt to ascertain the specifics of language demand such that we can determine whether the time-consuming and expensive route of language instruction should be the first priority—if it is necessary at all—for all languages.

It may be that specific transcultural occupational tasks for a specific purpose dealing with a specific culture or country can be accomplished in English, a language spoken around the world, or even in a less instructionally demanding European language. It may be that such a task can be more efficiently handled without language instruction, by non-native English-speaking Americans whose first-language skills are up to the task, although there is little question that this avenue will not replace the training of native English speakers. Thus, while formal language instruction will continue to play a crucial role in matching needs to capacity, an effective strategic planning process must of necessity begin to lay out a map of occupational needs by task and linguistic/cultural environment.

## CONCLUSION

The creation of LCTL architecture (both field-specific and pan-LCTL, with new coordinating bodies both within and across sectors, and a pan-LCTL coordinating body that cuts across all sectors and LCTLs), the specification of national language needs, and even the notion that national strategic planning is feasible—all this may seem to be, at first blush, an adventure in the firmament. Yet it is interesting that within the last few years the NCOLCTL has been created; CALL has come into being; the private sector ASTM project on standards has been launched; and there is a growing recognition of the importance of preserving the first languages of our many ethnic communities. At the same time, the new funding initiatives such as the National Security Education Act, the quite recent establishment of three National Foreign Language Resource Centers within Title VI, the Foreign Language Assistance Act, the LCTL initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the development of College Board tests in Japanese and Chinese, the funding for surveys of the principal LCTLs—these and many other such national activities suggest that change is in the air. Indeed, we are beginning to respond to hitherto unanticipated domestic and global chal-

lenges that will require a fresh approach to our national capacity in matters of language competency.

Yet at this stage one senses only change, not necessarily change directed by planning and coordination. In fact, with regard to the improvement of language instruction, many of the new funding initiatives could seemingly be characterized as meeting tomorrow's challenges in the LCTLs with yesterday's assumptions, without a viable architecture within which change can most effectively occur.

NOTES

1. "Results of the Modern Language Association's Fall 1990 Survey of Foreign Language Enrollments in U.S. Colleges and Universities," press release, MLA, New York, September 23, 1991.

2. See, for example, Richard D. Brecht and A. Ronald Walton, *The Case for a Framework for Learner-Managed Foreign Language Learning* (Washington, D.C.: National Foreign Language Center, forthcoming).

3. The National Endowment for the Humanities has selected one infrastructure component, teacher training, for attention in a select number of LCTLs, but without a powerful Expertise Base in the superstructure, it is not clear who should be teaching the teachers or what they should be taught.

4. A possible exception to this generalization may be the National Security Education Program, which emphasizes, in addition to undergraduate study abroad and graduate student fellowships, national capacity building through the program development portion of the initiative.

5. In fact, much work is being done on the generic and language-specific Language Learning Frameworks by NCOLCTL, within a project funded by the Ford Foundation. Cf. Brecht and Walton, *Learner-Managed Foreign Language Learning*.

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